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PR07:008

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

FEBRUARY 9, 2007

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Chiang Removes Social Security Numbers from State Tax Liens

SACRAMENTO – State Controller John Chiang directed the Franchise Tax Board to remove social security numbers from all state issued tax liens.

“Last year, identity theft and fraud cost consumers at least \$1.2 billion nationwide.” Chiang said. “The Franchise Tax Board issues 153,000 liens each year – my directive means there will be 153,000 less opportunities for fraud.”

Current state law prohibits the Franchise Tax Board from publicly displaying an individual’s social security number in an effort to protect against identity theft. The law, though, provides an exception for reporting liens to third parties, such as financial institutions, employers and county recorders’ offices.

Chiang, who chairs the Franchise Tax Board, said the department will immediately begin lining out social security numbers and manually processing liens until a process is in place to automate the masking of social security numbers.

Liens are public records, and are used to collect taxes owed when the FTB cannot collect through voluntary means, withholding orders, garnishing or asset seizure.

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